

It's about time for a roundabout, Brookdale college neighbors say

TRAFFIC CONFIGURATION IS SMALLER, SAFER THAN A CIRCLE

Posted by the [Asbury Park Press](#) on 04/21/06

BY [ANDREA ALEXANDER](#)

FREEHOLD BUREAU

MIDDLETOWN — Karin Curtis lives in the "Brookdale express" neighborhood.

Residents call it that because cars speed through her Lincroft development to avoid the Newman Springs Road traffic signal on their way to Brookdale Community College. The traffic on her residential street makes Curtis fear for the safety of her children, who ride their bicycles in front of her Lindy Lane house.

But county plans to build a roundabout — which is smaller than a circle, with slower-moving traffic — at the intersection of Brookdale's entrance and Newman Springs Road may alleviate some of the congestion.

Officials are proceeding with plans to install the first roundabout on a county road in front of Brookdale. The project is in the final design stages and the county plans to seek bids for the work this summer. Construction is slated to start by the middle of September, Monmouth County Engineer Joseph M. Ettore said.

Lincroft residents hope that plans to replace the traffic light with a roundabout will direct cars out of their neighborhood.

"I think it will help tremendously," Curtis said. "Traffic will move more efficiently. It will be a draw to stay on the main road rather than making turns through the neighborhood."

The proposal — the result of a 24-month study of a four-mile stretch of Route

520 — is the first project advancing to improve Newman Springs Road. County engineers are looking for ways to improve traffic along Route 520 from the Holmdel boundary at Crawfords Corner Everett Road to Shrewsbury Avenue in Red Bank.

In 2002, hundreds of residents turned out at a meeting to urge county officials to turn down a consultant's preliminary recommendation to widen Route 520. Members of the Lincroft Village Green Association, a residents' group, did their own research and found an expert in roundabouts, Michael J. Wallwork, president of an Orange Park, Fla.-based traffic engineering firm.

The county had considered several alternatives for the Newman Springs Road entrance into Brookdale, said Ettore, who credited the Village Green Association for proposing the roundabout.

The county had also considered building a jughandle to provide access to Brookdale, but Lincroft residents were concerned the measure would be a precursor to turning the road into a highway.

Ettore said the county did its own research until officials were confident the proposed roundabout was "based on sound engineering practices."

He said the state Department of Transportation is also considering designing roundabouts on some state roads that are busier than Route 520, which made the county more comfortable advancing the project.

Lincroft resident Linda Lintz is hopeful the project will alleviate traffic in front of the college.

"I think the roundabout is going to be a good thing once everyone adjusts to it," Lintz said. "I think it is going to work out great."

Traffic must slow down to enter a roundabout but does not stop, Ettore said. Roundabouts require less property than traffic circles and can be landscaped, he

said.

Brookdale officials are also supporting the project and hope it will be completed as part of an overall plan to improve traffic on Route 520, said Louis Goetting, Brookdale's executive vice president of operations.

"The studies indicate it will make it easier for people to access the college and may improve the flow of traffic," Goetting said. "We are certainly hopeful it will work and enable the county to move down the line to make improvements to Route 520."

Jill Henry, a Lincroft resident who advocated the project, said once people get used to the change, "they will see it is more effective and works better and we didn't have to increase the number of lanes or anything."